BOOK III OF III

DAYLIGHT™

♦ HOWARD CHAYKIN ♦ JOSÉ LUIS GARCIA-LOPÉZ ♦
STEVE OLIFF

Immortality made Theater of History—or was it History of Theater? After hundreds of years of the Forever Plague, Mankind lost most of its humanity. We replaced these innate sensibilities with rituals and role playing, emotional shadowboxing that deluded the Children of Twilight into thinking the Long Night would never come.

Better than any other man of his time, Tommy understood the lust for the Grand Guignol of our tenuously held Humanity, and he played it out on a Bloody Stage of Galactic proportions. Tommy spread disease, war, famine, and pestilence across the known Universe on his own syphilitic whim.

And there we sat, consumed by the Forever Plague, that Trojan Horse gift of Immortality—an endless ringside seat for the slow and inexorable drama of decline. Only a handful of men and women held the very future in their none too facile hands.

It's only in retrospect that I realized I was one of those men—so who better to tell the story? But if I'd known the collapse of civilization as we know it was the middle of the story—not the end—I would have gotten off right there.

From *The Oral Diaries of Homer Glint*

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♦ TWILIGHT ♦

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TWILIGHT

♦ BOOK III ♦

♦ BLOOD ♦

ON THE

♦ STARS ♦

I WILL NOT WATCH THIS, F'TATATEETA-I WILL NOT--

--BAD ENOUGH YOU FEEL COMPELLED TO BEHAVE SO--

--SO--

CATLY...?

WHATEVER-- AT ANY RATE--

--I SHOULDN'T BE MADE TO WATCH THIS SHIT-

--AND CERTAINLY NOT THROUGH YOUR EYES.

BUGGER OFF, HOMER-- AND CHECK IT OUT--

--I'M A CAT--AND AS A CAT--

I'M SUPPOSED TO ACT LIKE THIS--

IT'S MY FERAL NATURE, GET IT...?

BUT...

FORGET "BUT--" I'M A CAT.

THINGS ARE DIFFERENT NOW, DAMNIT--

--AFTER A THOUSAND YEARS, THEY HAVE TO BE-

FOR YOU AND YOUR CO-BIPEDS, MAYBE--

--BUT FOR US QUADRUPEDS-

--SOME :chomp: THINGS :gloorp: NEVER :gnash: CHANGE.

AGGHH!

EXCEPT, OF COURSE, TEACHING A CAT TO SHARE.

WANT A BITE, HOMER OLD PAL?

YOU ARE A HORRID LITTLE SHIT...

...I SHOULD HAVE LEFT YOU IN THAT ROCKET TUBE.

YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, SHOULD KNOW, HOMER--

YOU CAN'T FIGHT BIOLOGICAL NECESSITY.

--AND ANOTHER THING--THAT "LEAVE ME IN THE ROCKET TUBE" SHIT'S GETTING OLDER THAN YOU..

--YOU CAN OPEN YOUR EYES, NOW--I LEFT THE LEFTOVERS ON THE FLOOR.

I GUESS THE OLD NATURE VERSUS NURTURE TIFF'S NEVER GOING TO BE RESOLVED--

--I JUST THOUGHT, ONCE WE'D BEEN AROUND SO LONG, AND DIGESTED SO MUCH--

--SO TO SPEAK--

--THAT WE'D HAVE A BETTER HANDLE ON--

--WHAT ARE YOU UP TO NOW--?

THAT'S HUMANS YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT...

AGAIN-!?!

US LOWER ORDERS--WE DON'T EXPECT QUITE SO MUCH FROM OURSELVES.

THUNG!!!

DAMN!!

GUESS I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE GETTING A LITTLE TOO OLD AROUND HERE.

NOT FUNNY, GLINT--NOT FUNNY.

"MAYBE NOT-- BUT JUST RIFE WITH REDOLENT TRUTH..."

"REDOLENT TRUTH...!?!"

ANYTHING YOU WANT IT-- I GOT IT--

SO-- YOU'RE A PIMP..

--EXACTLY WHAT DO YOU CALL THIS MUD-BALL, ANY-WAY?

JERK-WATER IB.

"AH, YES... JERKWATER IB..."

"...IT WAS ALWAYS JUST "IB" TO ME..."

ONE MORE THING...HOW MANY MILE-HIGH BUILDINGS CALLED TOMORROW TOWERS...?

ONE...

I COUNT FOUR-- SO FAR...

"YOU'D THINK-- AFTER A NEAR MILLENNIUM OF IMMORTALITY...

"...THEY'D HAVE BRED THIS KIND OF CAB DRIVER OUT OF THE GENE POOL..."

HEY-- RELAX, PAL-- WE'RE OLD BUDS, NO...?

WE'LL ADJUST THE METER ACCORDINGLY...

SO, YEAH-- WHAT'S IT GONNA BE TONIGHT, HUH?

I MEAN, LOOK, RIGHT-- MINUTE I SEEN YIZ BOTH ON THE OUTSIDE-I KNEW YOU WERE SPORTS--

"BUT SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE..."

I MEAN--AN INTERSPECIES COUPLE--GO NO--

--AND ME-- I'M NO ONE TO TALK...

SO SHUT THE HELL UP, MAN, HUH...?

"AND SPEAKING OF NEVER CHANGING..."

OR I'LL FRY YOUR HEAD.

PLEASE, STAR--

--HE'S JUST SOME OUTPLANET LOUT WITH A FILTHY MIND...

HEY, PAL-- LISTEN TO YOUR GIRLFRIEND-- WHAT DO YOU SAY?

OKAY, "PAL"--

--YOUR SECOND-CLASS LITTLE LIFE'S BEEN SAVED BY MY SO-CALLED "GIRL-FRIEND."

"THERE WAS ALWAYS STAR HAWKINS FOR CONSISTENCY."

SO PULL OVER--UP THERE..

--AND TELL ME..

30¢

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--YOU SEEN THIS MAN...?

CAN'T SAY AS I HAVE...

...AND SINCE I CAN'T SEEM TO SELL YOU ANYTHING SALACIOUS...

"HAWKINS AND THIS CABBY WERE OF THE SAME CLOTH..."

HERE'S A DEUCE OF TWO-FERS TO THE BIG COCKFIGHT-- AN' TELL OL' MAN IMHOF I SENT YOU.

"THEY BOTH ABSOLUTELY LOVED JERKWATER."

YOU SEEN THIS MAN...?

I SEEN 'EM ALL, GENERAL...

WE GOT NO TIME FOR THIS CRAP, BABE..

"A RAT'S NEST ANY SELF-RESPECTING HUMAN WOULD AVOID LIKE A PLAGUE..."

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I ♥ EVE EXPRESS

CHARGE IT

WHY WOULD I SAY I DID IF I DIDN'T...?

I HAVE HAD IT UP TO HERE...

"...AND EVERY SO OFTEN, HAWKINS WOULD DEMONSTRATE A WEE TOUCH OF THAT HUMANITY..."

...JUST HAVING TO TALK TO YOU.. YOU--

SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS..?

THANK YOU...

"THEY WERE VERY RARE SO OFTENS."

SPA'congggkkkk!

DAMN IT, ILDA-- I HATE WHEN YOU TOUCH ME--CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT...?

THE CHINESE CHURCH'S PAYING US BOTH FOR A JOB WELL DONE--

--OTHERWISE YOU'D'VE BEEN HISTORY YEARS AGO...

PLEASE, STAR-- FORGIVE ME...

"POOR ILDA--A GREEK HEROINE IN FULL METAL DRESS..."

TOMMYLAND

TOMORROW LOVES YOU!

TOMORROW

...I DIDN'T MEAN TO UPSET YOU.

OKAY, OKAY-- JUST DON'T GO ORGANIC ON ME NOW- WE GOT TOO MUCH AT STAKE HERE.

"STUCK ON A BASTARD NOBODY COULD EVER MISTAKE FOR A HERO..."

THE WORD IS HERE...!

WHAT ARE THEY ALL WAITING FOR...?

HUNH...

EVERYBODY IS SO TENSE-- LIKE SOMETHING'S GOING TO HAPPEN--

IT'S HIM.

HIM?

THE HIGHEST CONCENTRATION OF TOMMY-NESS I'VE EVER SCANNED...

BE READY FOR THE WORD, MY FRIEND-- BE ALL TOO READY!

HALF MEN! ROBOTS! LOWER ORDERS!

RETURN TO THE GENETIC CESSPOOL FROM WHICH YOU CAME--

YOUR MASTERS ARE HERE!

HERE TO PUT YOU IN YOUR RIGHTFUL PLACE!

AMEN!

AMEN!

AMEN!

AND YOU *NATURAL* MEN--

--WITH *FLESH* FOR PARENTS... *BLOOD* FOR KIN...

"*Whewww!!* *WELL*... WHAT JERKWATER IS *WAS*..."

...HE IS HERE TO *SAVE* YOU...

...WITH THE *DIVINE* LIGHT OF *FOREVER*...

"...WAS A *CESSPOOL*... COLLECTING THE ASSORTED *DREGS*...

...FROM THE *TYRANNY* OF OLD DEAD GODS... *AND* GODDESSES...

TOMMY!

TOMMY!

TOMMY!

TOMMY!

"...A *TOILET* FOR THE *INDISCRIMINATE* LOWLIFE AND BIOGENETIC *MISFITS*...

...AND FROM THE *TYRANNY* OF BIOMISCEGEN-ATION...

TOMORROW!

TOMORROW!

TOMORROW!

"...IN *OTHER* WORDS, THE *PERFECT* BREEDING GROUND..."

I GIVE YOU *NOW*, OH MY *BROTHERS*, THE LIVING GOD...

AND *HOW* SWEET IT IS...!

"...FOR THE SOUND OF THUNDER WONDER SHOW."

"...TO HAVE BEEN WITH YOU ALL FOR SO VERY LONG...!!

AND SO VERY GRAND TO FEEL SO MUCH AT HOME...SO VERY FAR FROM HOME...

"LIKE I SAID--A CESSPOOL."

"...THE PEOPLE ARE THE HEART OF JERKWATER-IS--THE HEARTLAND."

THEY'RE MY PEOPLE...

"...TOMORROW PEOPLE..."

"...AND TOMORROW PEOPLE KNOW JUST WHO MATTERS--RIGHT--?

TOMMY! TOMORROW! TOMMY!

TOMMY TOMORROW!

TOMMY! TOMMY!

TOMMY!

TOMMY!

TOMMY!

TOMMY!

TOMMY!

"...THERE WASN'T A SOUND AT THIS HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION...

"BUT THE WHOLE PACK OF HENOIDS MUST'VE THOUGHT VERY HARD..."

THAT'S RIGHT, OF COURSE...

"FROM THE STREETS BELOW, NOW, AN OCCASIONAL COUGH WAS HEARD."

...ME.

"YOU COULD FEEL THE ELECTRIC TINGLE AT THAT LITTLE SYLLABLE..."

SO WHEN I SAY IT'S LONG PAST TIME--TOO LONG PAST TIME...

"...YOU COULD FEEL THE CROWD WARMING UP AS HE REVVED IT..."

TIME THAT WE CARVED UP THE FUCKING KARELISTS-EVERY LAST REMAINING ONE...

"WARMING UP--AND STARTING TO LOOK LIKE THEIR LIEGE AND LORD..."

THEIR DAMNED GODDESS IS DEAD AND LONG GONE--AND THOSE HOLY-ROLLING BASTARDS STILL REFUSE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO ME!

"...A FEW STARTED FOAMING AT THE MOUTH...

ME! THEIR GOD OF DESTINY!

"...LIKE DOGS TAKING ON THEIR MASTER'S TRAITS AND TICS..."

I AM AFRAID IT'S TRUE, SIR...

OUTER PLANET AGENTS HAVE REPORTED THE PLANETEER ARMADA ON A DEFINITE COURSE FOR THE ONE TRUE EARTH.

HOW MANY WEEKS DID THEY...?

I BEG YOUR PARDON, LORD GLINT--NOT WEEKS, BUT DAYS...

"IT WAS HARD TIMES FOR HUMANITY--FROM THE GROUND UP..."

...AND APPARENTLY THE FLEET IS SWOLLEN WITH THOUSANDS OF PERSONAL CRAFT--

PRIVATE SHIPS...?

YES, MY LORD-- SHANGHAIED--OR CONVERTED-- DEPENDING ON THE SOURCE...

HAS ANYONE HAD ANY LUCK RAISING BRENDA?

I'M AFRAID NOT, YOUR--

CHAPTER EIGHT

BRENDA!

I'M AWFULLY SORRY, MY LORD--

NOT TO WORRY, YOUNG MAN...

BRENDA!?!?

I CAN HANDLE LORD WOOD...

"...THOUGH TAKE CARE OF' MIGHT HAVE BEEN A BETTER CHOICE OF WORDS..."

YOU WERE THERE, BRENDA-- YOU--WERE THERE...

--REMEMBER-- THE NIGHT I THREW IT ALL AWAY...?

"SINCE KAREL DIED, NO ONE TOOK MORE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY THAN POOR WOOD..."

RENOUNCED MY FAITH-- MY VERY VOWS...

...YES-- YOU WERE THERE...

...THE MOMENT I BESMIRCHED MY ETERNAL SOUL...

DON'T WORRY, YOUNG MAN--

NO ONE EVER LOVED KAREL MORE-- NO ONE--!

--SHE WAS MY VERY LIFE--MY REASON FOR BEING...

...MY ONE AND ONLY LOVE...

BRENT...

YOU REMEMBER-- BRENDA--SHE WAS THERE--

--SHE WATCHED ME THROW MY LOVE AWAY...

EASE UP, BIPED-- EVERYBODY'S GOT A PRICE--

THUND!

MMMRRRRRRRRROOWWWWWRRRR!!!!

OH, KAREL- I BEG OF YOU-- PLEASE...

...FORGIVE ME--FOR WRONGING YOU...

...FOR BREAKING MY ETERNAL VOWS OF CHASTITY...

...WITH BRENDA TOMORROW...

"POOR BRENT'S LITTLE BREAK-DOWNS HAD REALLY REACHED AN OPERATIC PITCH BY THEN...

"...TOO DAMN MUCH CONFESSIONAL SELF FLAGELLATION FOR THIS GOD'S TASTE..."

"YEAH-- I KNOW-- QUADRUPEDS WILL BE QUADRUPEDS..."

GET ME DR. ROBERT FROM MEDICENTER--

I WANT THE LORD WOOD SEDATED AND SAFE FROM HIS OWN MISCONDUCT.

"...BUT ENOUGH IS ENOUGH..."

PICKING UP A TRANSCAST FROM THE PLANETEER FLEET--

SAME HERE--

--ACCORDING TO THIS, THE KARELIST KNIGHTS OF THE GALAXY-- I'M QUOTING HERE--"ARE CRUCIFYING AND EATING ALL PRISONERS..."

PRISONERS...?

COME ON, HOMER-- DON'T YOU THINK SOMEONE SHOULD'VE GOTTEN BRENT LAID YEARS AGO...?

YOU'RE ASKING FOR IT, KITTY CAT--

--OR DO YOU WANT TO TRY ANOTHER LAUNCHING...?

"-AND WE'RE ALSO CIRCUMCISING ALL GROWN MEN..."

GAAAGG GGHH!

"NOW, WHY THE HELL DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT WHEN WE WERE TRYING TO SMEAR TOMMY IN THE FIRST PLACE...?"

MY LORD GLINT--

I THINK WE'VE GOTTEN THROUGH TO BRENDA...

PATCH IN AT ONCE--

--F'TATATEETA! YOU FOUR-LEGGED PLAGUE- GET OVER HERE RIGHT NOW!

...I NEED YOUR EYES...

...AND WHERE THE HELL IS THAT DOCTOR...?!

AH, HOMER--FOR ALL THIS TIME--ALL THIS DAMNED IMMORTAL TIME...

...IT'S AWFULLY NICE TO HAVE A FEW CONSTANTS...

...YOU WILL NEVER CHANGE...

WHY, BRENDA--

..WE WERE JUST TALKING ABOUT YOU...

I'D LOVE TO SMALL TALK, HOMER...

...BUT THE LOCAL HOLY BUSH WARS HAVE REACHED THE SOLAR FLARE WEAPONS STAGE..

...AND COMMUNICATIONS ARE IFFY AT BEST...

"...BRENDA HAD TAKEN IT UPON HERSELF TO FIND THE HOME-WORLD OF THE METHUSELOIDS..."

TALK ABOUT SMALL TALK-- I'M NOT THE ONE WHO STARTED IN WITH ALL THIS "FEW CONSTANTS" SHIT...

AND ASIDE FROM JAMMING COMMUNICATIONS, THE FLARE DETONATIONS...

...HAVE STARTED A SERIES OF ELECTRO-MAGNETIC STORMS...

"...AND SHE LOOKED LIKE HELL FOR IT."

...WHICH ARE MAKING MY SEARCH FOR THE METHUSELOID MOTHER RACE NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE.

ON A LIGHTER NOTE: HOW HOLDS THE ALTAR OF THE ADEPTS...?

"IF BRENDA HAD ANY FAULTS AT ALL...

"...IT WAS A SNOTTY ATTITUDE..."

NO CALL FOR SARCASM, DEAR...

NO SARCASM INTENDED..

OH, SURE-- COME, NOW--IT'S NO SECRET YOU NEVER SHARED YOUR FELLOW MAN'S WORSHIP OF KAREL...

"...AND NO SECRET TO ME THAT YOU HELD YOURSELF RESPONSIBLE FOR HER DEATH..."

DROP IT, HOMER-- SOME OTHER TIME.

I SWORE I'D FIND THE RACE THAT MADE THE METHUSELOIDS...

...THOUGH, SINCE WE DID GENOCIDALLY ELIMINATE AN ENTIRE SUBSPECIES--

--I BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND WHY THEY HAVEN'T RESPONDED TO ANY COMMUN-ICATIONS--

COME HOME, BRENDA--WE NEED--

I SAID I'D FIND THEM TO END BOTH PLAGUES--

--OF ETERNITY AND TOMORROW...

...AND I THINK MAYBE I'VE FOUND THE KEY...

'SBEST I CAN DO FOR YOU, PAL, FOUR-TO-ONE--

"THERE WAS THE FAINTEST HINT OF SLAUGHTER-HOUSE IN THE AIR..."

--AND YOU'RE DAMNED LUCKY TO GET THAT...!

BRUJO ROJO.. KICK THAT SCUMDOG'S ASS--!

YEAH-- YEAH-- EAT THAT COMB--!

GOT FIVE HEAVY ON IRON-STORM..

YO, BOOKIE-BY ME, HERE..

5

I GOT FIVE HERE ON IRON-STORM..

--HE'S GOT CHAMP WRITTEN ALL OVER HIM--

FIVE...?

YOU MADE ME WALK OVER HERE FOR FIVE...?

YOU LOOKIN' TO CAUSE HEART FAILURE WITH YOUR GO-FOR-BROKE BETTIN' STYLE...?

AND SINCE WHEN ARE YOU SO DAMNED CHOOSY ABOUT BUSINESS...?

SINCE YOUR GOD AND MINE-TOMMY TOMORROW--

--INCREASED THE INTER-TITHE--

--THE PAPERWORK ON A FIVE INTERTRIPLAN-CREDICHEK--

--COSTS MORE THAN THE FIVE PLANCS--

"...OVERLAID WITH THE SCENT OF ALL-TOO-HUMAN SWEAT..."

DAMN SHITFIRE!

PAY UP, GONIF--

FIGHT'S NOT OVER YET, PAL--JUST COOL YOUR TOOL.

KILL HIM KILL HIM KILL

Huuh...?

NOW!!!

"A SCENT OF ANTICIPATION..."

KILL

OKAY, OKAY...

...JUST GIVE ME A CHANCE TO FOCUS...

...AIM...

"...AND, WITH THE ENTIRE CROWD LINKED NEUROGENICALLY TO THE FIGHTING COCKS..."

POK

FFFFFTHH!

"...EVERYBODY WAS HIP TO THE THRILL OF VICTORY AND THE AGONY OF DEFEAT."

THAT'S THE ONE DID IT-

--THE BIG, DRUNK OFFWORLDER...

CUT HIS BALLS OFF, MONTELEON--

--HE'S GOT IT COMING!

WHERE'S MY MONEY, YOU THIEVING OFFSKI--?

WHO PAID YOU TO KILL MY BRUJO?

YAAAAARRGG

COME ON, JON--TIME TO GO--

Hunh...?

"POOR JON--NOTHING SEEMED TO SLOW HIS SPIRAL OF DECLINE..."

"...CERTAINLY NOT HIS BROTHER..."

COME ON, JON--DON'T BE SUCH A PAIN IN THE ASS--

--WE'RE HERE TO PULL YOU OUT OF THIS...

I HATE WHEN YOU PUT ME THROUGH THIS--

I'VE GOT HIM, STAR.

ZZZZZOTT

I DON'T NEED SHIT FROM YOU, UNDERSTAND--?

SHIT...

DRAG HIM--CARRY HIM LIKE A SACK OF POTATOES--I COULD GIVE A DAMN.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS--

WHAT KIND OF "OFFICIAL BUSINESS"?

PLAGUE--OFFWORLD VARIETY--CONGENITALLY FATAL--

AND HE'S GOT IT.

"AH, YES--PLAGUE BULLSHIT--GETS 'EM EVERY TIME...

"...MINUTE YOU MENTION PLAGUE, THESE BOHUNKS'D DROP EVERYTHING AND TEAR ASS OUT OF THERE..."

TAXI!

HE'S NOT STOPPING-!

I GOT YOUR NUMBER, YOU LITTLE BASTARD-!

LEAVE US HERE AND I'LL FEED YOU YOUR DAMNED HACK MEDALLION-

--I SWEAR IT BY EVERY DAMNED DASH-BOARD SAINT YOU CAN FIND...

YOUR FRIEND BACK THERE WITH YOU--

--I GOT A CLEAN CAB HERE--

--AN' I CAN LIVE WITHOUT HIM TOSSIN' HIS COOKIES IN HERE--GET ME--?

"WHAT WAS IT I WAS SAYING ABOUT CABDRIVERS...?

SHUT UP AND DRIVE--!

ILDA-- DARLING-- IT IS YOU--

KING PALACE

ILDA ILDA ILDA...

I GOTTA CARRY HIM-- BUT I DON' GOTTA LISTEN TO THIS SPECIES MIXING SHIT--

LOOK AT HIM, STAR--

--DO YOU REALLY THINK HE CAN DO IT?

ILDA-- KISS-- KISS--

"OH MY... THE THINGS LITTLE BROTHERS CAN DRIVE THEIR OLDER BROTHERS TO..."

WE CAN CLEAN HIM UP...

...AND I'M SURE THERE'S SOME LOCAL HIGH-SPEED THERAPY TO FLUSH HIM OUT...

"EVEN IN THE BEST OF CAUSES..."

I KNOW JUST THE PLACE-- AND JUST THE GUY...

SSSCREEEAWK MAYDAY MAYDAY--

I DIDN'T ASK FOR YOUR HELP, TUBBY...

"...AND EVEN WITH HAWKINS ON MY-- OUR SIDE..."

"... AND WHAT NEWS! EVEN THEN, AFTER THE FACT, I SUSPECTED THERE WAS MORE THAN COINCIDENCE AT WORK HERE..."

STAY TUNED-- ZZZZZ--

SO KEEP IT TO--

SHUT UP, BUDDY-- NEWS--

THE FIRST WAVE OF THE SOUND OF THUNDER HAS HIT HOMEWORLD...

"...STAR ALWAYS SAID, TIMING IS EVERYTHING..."

HOLY SHIT! SAINT TOMMY'S LAUNCHED HIS VERY OWN HOME-COMING PARADE NUCLEAR STRIKE--

TOUGH DAY TO BE CHINESE -- HUH...?!?

ROOAARRR

"...AND THERE HAD TO BE SOME LINK BETWEEN HAWKINS' SHENANIGANS ON JERKWATER...

"...AND TOMMY'S TIMED ASSAULT ON MOTHER EARTH..."

GET LORD HOMER OUT OF HERE--!!

THUNDT! THUNDT!

KAWAAH

BOOOOHHHHH

GET THE HELL AWAY FROM ME, YOUNG MAN--

--I'M STAYING PUT...!

"...EVEN THEN, I FELT SOME OTHER FORCES WERE KICKING IN HERE..."

I MUST INSIST, YOUR GRACE...

...YOU ARE TO RETREAT-- EITHER TO THE CATACOMBS...

...OR FOLLOW ME TO ONE OF THE FASTER SHUTTLES.

I WILL NOT LEAVE THE CHINESE TO DIE IN MY NAME...

BY YOUR VERY PRESENCE YOU ARE ENDANGERING COUNTLESS LIVES, YOUR GRACE...

...ONCE THEY KNOW YOU HAVE LEFT THE BUILDING, THE PLANETEERS WILL CERTAINLY REDUCE THEIR ASSAULT BY HALF.

"...I JUST COULDN'T TELL WHO... OR WHAT."

GET THE BIG ONES--

--THE BIG GUY DOESN'T WANT ANYTHING OF THIS LEFT STANDING.

THUNT!

YOU REALLY MUST TAKE ME FOR A SENILE FOOL, YOUNG MAN--

I'M BLIND-- NOT A SHITHEAD.

TOMMY DOESN'T CARE WHO'S IN HERE--

--HE JUST WANTS IT FOR HIS OWN.

KACHUNGGKKKRAK!

WE'VE GOT TO RE-ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH BRENDA--

--SHE'S BEEN IN THE THICK OF THIS SINCE WORD ONE--

I THINK WE'VE GOT HER, SIR-- BUT THE SIGNAL IS VERY WEAK--

"ONE MIGHT THINK--BEING AS GODS, AND ALL...

"...MAYBE THE PHONES WOULD BE A LITTLE BETTER-BUT NO..."

BRENDA, CAN YOU HEAR?

SCCCREE EEEAWWK K-OMER!

I MISSED ALL THAT, BRENDA...

TOUGH DARTS, HOMER-- YOU'RE COMING THROUGH FINE ON THIS END-

"...ON THE OTHER HAND, PERHAPS A BETTER TIME COULD BE FOUND TO DISCUSS IT--?

WELL-- ANY SUCCESS?

YES, HOMER--I THINK I'VE GOT IT...

--ENOUGH CONCENTRATED FOREVER FIREPOWER TO PUT THAT POWER-MAD--

KACHOOM!

SON OF ABREEEEE AWWWKK!

WHAT-!?!?

WE LOST ALL OF THAT LAST--

THEY'VE BREACHED THE BATTLE-MENTS--!

SPUTTSPUT SCRAWKKK- GOT IT-

BRRAP BRAPPABRRA

BR

KILL ME EVERY LAST ONE OF THESE BASTARDS!!

BRAP

BOOM

BRRRAP

"...THERE WAS SOMETHING TERRIBLY *UNREAL* ABOUT IT ALL..."

CHUNT CHUNT

NO QUARTER!

SAVE LORD GLINT!!

AND NO PRISONERS!

PLEASE, MY LORD--!

"...OF *COURSE*, SEEING IT THROUGH F'TATATEETA'S EYES MIGHT HAVE *HELPED*..."

AAAGGGH!

SSKIZLLL

BLAM BLAM

CLICK

WITH A *FEW* EXCEPTIONS...

BACK *OFF*, YOU SON-OF-A-*BITCH*-

"...BRAVE WORDS...

"...PARTICULARLY WHEN YOU CONSIDER HOW *WET* MY PANTS WERE..."

COME, LORD GLINT...

...I'VE BEEN ASKED TO BRING YOU TO HIM...

MROWWR

"...MAYBE THAT TERROR--OVER-WHELMED MY SENSES...

IS THAT A CAT...?

I'VE ONLY SEEN PICTURES...

MROWR

CLANG

WHOPPIT!

"...WHATEVER--THAT WAS THE FIRST MOMENT I FELT IT... BOTH KAREL'S PRESENCE-- I SWEAR...

"...AND TOMMY'S COMPLETE RETREAT FROM SANITY...

"...AND F'TATATEETA FELT IT, TOO."

WHA-!?!

YAAARRRGGH!!

SHOULD WE KILL THE OLD MAN?

I'D LOVE TO-MAYBE EVEN A LIVE DISSECTION--

--BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, THIS OLD BASTARD HAS THE PROTECTION OF THE ANGELS...

...SINCE IT WAS HE WHO FIRST BROUGHT LORD TOMMY'S WORD TO THE PEOPLE...

...THE SAINTED LORD HAS GRANTED HIM INTERPLANETARY AMNESTY!

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS...

...IT'S FINALLY MINE... ALL MINE...

...TELL ME SOMETHING...

...CAN KNOWING ME BE AS GRATIFYING AS BEING ME...?

WHY CERTAINLY, YOU--

RHETORICAL QUESTION, RHEINGOLD...

...WITH THIS EARTH IN MY POCKET, IT'S ALL MINE...

"...A BIT SLOW ON THE UPTAKE OCCASIONALLY... BUT HE SEEMED TO GET THE IDEA..."

...EVERY PIECE OF REAL ESTATE THAT SELF-RIGHTEOUS BITCH HAD UNDER HER THUMB...

IT'S ALL YOURS NOW, TOMMY...

SKAZZZZZORR

RCHHH

IT'S SO VERY GOOD TO HAVE THE FIRE WITHIN~

--THE CLEANSING FIRE!!

"I KNEW NOW WHY I'D FELT KAREL'S PRESENCE..."

AND, ONCE IN A GREAT WHILE, TO RELEASE THE FIRE...

"...IT WAS TOMMY..."

... TO WIPE THAT BITCH'S MEMORY FROM THE FACE OF THE GALAXY!!

"...HE'D KILLED HER-- ROBBED HER OF HER VERY PSIONIC FORCE..."

ALWAYS THE EYES... GOD DAMNED REPORTER...

"... AND, BY DOING THAT, HAD ABSORBED A GOOD PART OF HER, TOO..."

...TOO DAMNED GOOD FOR THE PLANETEERS ...

"...AND EVERY TIME HE PULLED SOME STUNT--SOME GOD GIMMICK...

... TIME I'M THROUGH, SHE WON'T EVEN BE HISTORY...

"...HE WAS LEFT WITH NOT MUCH MORE THAN A NAGGING PRESENCE..."

"...AN AFTERGLOW-- AND HOW IRONIC...

"...THAT EVERY TIME HE EXERCISED HIS POWER, SHE'D BE THERE..."

OH, MY STARS-- AND I DO MEAN MY STARS--

HOW SWEET IT IS--TO BE FREE FROM HER THOUSAND-YEAR LEGACY OF MISCEGENATION...

AMEN!

"...EVEN WHEN-- ESPECIALLY WHEN--WE WERE MARRIED..."

AND OH--WHAT A MIGHTY DAY--

--TO EXPUNGE FROM LIVING MEMORY...

...ANY HISTORY BEFORE THIS MOMENT...

"...HAH! FAT CHANCE, PAL... LIKE I SAY...EVEN WHEN SHE WAS MY WIFE--

"--SHE ALWAYS GOT THE LAST WORD."

...AND WHO BETTER TO DELETE FROM THE LEDGER OF LIFE ALL MENTION OF THAT ARROGANT MENSTRUATING AFFRONT TO HUMAN DIGNITY...

...TO TELL THE STORY OF MAN--AND HIS RIGHTFUL ASCENCION TO MY KINGDOM...

"FINDING OUT GOD WAS A POLITICIAN WAS QUITE BAD ENOUGH..."

...THAN THE VERY MAN WHO FIRST BROUGHT ME TO PUBLIC ATTENTION--

--HOMER GLINT-- FORMER GODHEAD.

"...BUT A STALINIST--! NO EXCUSES..."

DON'T BE IRONIC, TOMMY--IT WAS NEVER A VERY LONG SUIT FOR YOU.

IRONIC? I WOULDN'T DARE IN YOUR COMPANY, HOMER...

FORGET IT, TOMMY--IF YOU'RE GOING TO PATRONIZE ME, WE CAN GO BACK TO IRONY--

TAKE MY WORD, LITTLE MAN--

--YOU ARE GOING TO REWRITE HISTORY-

"...OR AT LEAST COPY-EDIT IT..."

NOW...?

NOW.

YAAARRGUCCH!

YOU SAID IT WOULD SOBER HIM UP--

--NOT TURN HIM INSIDE OUT...

"...POOR JON STARKER...

"...ALL ETERNITY EVER DID FOR JON STARKER...

"...WAS GIVE HIM *MORE* TIME TO LIE IN THE *GUTTER*."

I JUST WANT TO DIE-

YARRRGH!

ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

FORGET THAT SHIT...

...YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE DOWN THE *BIG* GUY...

...AND WE *BOTH* KNOW THE *ONLY* WAY TO GET *CLOSE* TO THE TUMMELER IS TO GO *BIO-MECHANICAL*...

"OF COURSE, UNDER *TOMMY'S* BENEVOLENCE, THE BIO-MECHANICS HAD BEEN DRIVEN *UNDERGROUND*..."

I COULD GIVE A SHIT, AXEL--

"...BUT EVEN *ABOVE* GROUND, STARKER *NEVER* WOULD'VE GONE *NEAR* IT..."

AND *WHAT'S* IN IT FOR *ME*, ANYWAY...?

"...TO SEE *JON STARKER*, THE FINEST MANHUNTER IN THE *KNOWN* UNIVERSE, SUNK SO *LOW* WAS *HELLACIOUS*..."

WHY IN HELL SHOULD *I* WANT TO BE PART OF *ANY* MACHINE--

--OR BE *MELDED* WITH A RO--

--AH... *hmmm*... YES... WELL...

WHAT, JON-- WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND...?

I'LL DO IT...

...ON ONE CONDITION...

...THAT I MELD WITH ILDA...

EEEUUWW!

...BODY AND SOUL.

"...YES, WELL...

"...A MILLENNIUM OF UNREQUITED LOVE CAN SCREW ANYBODY UP..."

A GREAT IDEA--I ONLY WISH I'D THOUGHT OF IT MYSELF.

YOU CAN'T MEAN IT, STAR--IT'S DISGUSTING...!

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT "DISGUSTING"?

FOR KAREL'S SAKE, ILDA--YOU'RE A DAMNED ROBOT--A MACHINE--

AND THAT'S ALL I'VE EVER BEEN TO YOU, ISN'T IT--A MACHINE...?

BUT NOW--A MACHINE WITH--WITH--

--WITH MY BROTHER'S--YOU KNOW--ESSENCE INSIDE...

"...AND THIS IS WHAT THEY MEAN BY PISS POOR PROTOPLASM...

"...HAWKINS WAS A LOATHSOME SLUG WHO FOUND HIMSELF ON THE SIDE OF RIGHT..."

LIKE FAMILY.

OH DEAR, STAR--I DIDN'T MEAN TO LOSE MY TEMPER...

...LIKE FAMILY...?

"...ONLY BY ACCIDENT..."

LIKE FAMILY.

:sob!:

I THINK I'M READY NOW--

WOULDN'T EVEN LET HER FINISH, HUH, AXEL...

...JUST LIKE FAMILY.

BLLLLLLLLLLLLTTT

GETCHER SOUND O' THUNDER WONDER SHOW TOMTOMS HERE--

"...AND SPEAKING OF FAMILY...

"...AND PISS POOR PROTOPLASM..."

-I MEAN, WHAT'S THE POINT YOU AIN'T GOT YOUR WONDER TOMTOMS ...?!?

GIVE ME TWO-- THERE-- OVER HERE-

GETCHER SOUND OF THUNDER WONDER TOMTOMS HERE--

--MAKE THAT JOYOUS NOISE UNTO THE LORD--!

"...EVERY DAMNED ONE OF'EM--THE GREAT UNWASHED..."

GET THE HELL AWAY FROM ME, TWO PERCENTER-!

WHO YOU CALLING TWO PERCENT--?

I GOT A DIRECT LINE TO--

YEAH, RIGHT--YOU AND THE REST OF YOUR SPERMBANK TELLERS...

THIS SHITHEAD BELIEVES THAT SPERMBANK CREDIT LINE--

--THEY DID SAY THERE'S ONE BORN EVERY MINUTE...

"...THEY LOVED OLD TOMMY-- TO PIECES..."

STAND BACK IN COMPLETE SILENCE-

TRANS-GRESSORS WILL BE SHOT.

"...GIVING THE CRAZY BASTARD A MANDATE TO SUBDIVIDE THE HUMAN RACE--AGAIN...

"...THIS TIME BY A NEW SET OF GUIDELINES...

"...BASED ON TOMMY'S CENTURIES-OLD XENOPHOBIC SPECIST RAVINGS,"

IT'S TRUE--! I WAS BORN ON EARTH-TRUE EARTH-

--AND I GOT THE PAPERS TO PROVE IT!

OH CHILDREN--I DO BELIEVE--

HE IS OUR SAVIOR!

"EVERY LAST ONE DEAD SET ON CONVINCING SOMEBODY THEY WERE A PART OF TOMMY'S HUMANITY..."

HEY-- I'M FROM EUROPE--!

TOMMY IS MY LORD--!

LOOK AT THE PUSS ON THAT CYBORG-- MAKES YOU THANK TOMMY, HUH...?

BEAR MY CHILD, TOMMY--I'M THE ONE--

I GOT MY PAPERS-- BORN ON BIRTHSTONE-- THIRD FROM THE SUN--

HAVE A HEART, LADY-- YOU HAVEN'T GOT A CHANCE--

YEAH--GET BACK BEFORE I KICK THE LIVING SHIT OUT OF YOU--AND YOURS...

GETCHER SOUND OF THUNDER WONDER SHOW TOMTOMS--!!

"...JUST A BASTARD RACE DESPERATELY CLAIMING A BLOOD-LINE WITH A MAD STEPFATHER..."

YEEEOOOWW!

STOMP THOSE LYING CHEATS--!

YEAH-- MEN BEFORE MUTATIONS-- AND MACHINES--!!

I LOVE THESE PEOPLE...

...I MEAN, REALLY--

--I JUST ADORE THE LITTLE GUY...

...THE AVERAGE FELLOW...

...AT LEAST HE CAN...

...HE WANTS THE--

GLINT!!!

OB1

"...IT'S A MAJOR COMEDOWN-- FROM GOD-HEAD TO GHOSTWRITER-- BUT I TOOK IT LIKE A MAN..."

YOU KNOW WHAT THEY HAVE THAT I DON'T, RIGHT, HOMER...?

FIND ME A WIFE, GLINT--

--DON'T YOU SEE THE IRONY, HOMER...?

WELL...

"...WELL, INDEED-- HOW ART DOES IMITATE LIFE..."

THE ONLY WOMAN FIT TO BE MY CONSORT...

...IS KAREL--THE PARIAH OF MY DEEPEST FEARS...

"...LIKE MARY SHELLEY'S MONSTER, TOMMY DEMANDS A MATE..."

THERE'S GOT TO BE A WOMAN OUT THERE, SOMEWHERE...

...A WOMAN WITH THE RIGHT TEMPERAMENT-- THE EQUAL OF KAREL...

SPARE ME YOUR BULLSHIT, TOMMY...

"...AND, LIKE THE MONSTER, TOMMY WAS FAR MORE AMORAL THAN IMMORAL--IN A WAY."

...YOU'VE EITHER ACCIDENTALLY INCINER-ATED THEM WHEN YOU EJACULATED--

--OR YOU'VE SIMPLY MURDERED THEM IN A FIT OF PIQUE...

YOU WILL NEVER FORGIVE ME FOR KAREL, WILL YOU, HOMER...?

"...IN AT LEAST A CLINICAL DEFINITION OF THE TERM..."

YOU REALLY HAVEN'T A CLUE, HUH, TOMMY...?

YOU BETTER WATCH THAT SMART MOUTH, HOMER--READ WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT ME IN THE PAPERS, MAN--

--I'M OUT OF CONTROL--A GOD WHO CAN'T BE TRUSTED...

...AND YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT...

KAREL FUCKED UP THE RACE--WASTING HER DAMNED TIME--

--JERKING EVERYBODY OFF FROM HER ALTAR IN THE SPACE MUSEUM...

...LIKE SOME PLASTIC GLOW-IN-THE-DARK MADONNA--

--FUCK THAT.

NOT ME, HOME--WHAT!?

YOU CALL THOSE TROUSERS?!?

I BEG YOUR PARD--

THESE PANTS--!

YES... MY LORD?

I SAID-- THESE PANTS--!

NEVER THE TWILL, DAMN IT...!

ZZZ

YAAARRGGHH

PRETTY *LOW* PAIN THRESHOLD, *HUH...?*

"WITH *WHAT* THEY WERE PUTTING HIM *THROUGH...*"

YEAH.. ESPECIALLY FOR SOMONE IN *HIS* LINE OF *WORK...*

STOP!

PLEASE!

"...I WOULD HAVE GIVEN POOR JON *ANYTHING* HE ASKED FOR..."

WHAT YOU GOT *HERE'S* A SITUATION *WE* LIKE TO CALL--

YEAH-I KNOW--*TWO* POUNDS OF SHIT IN A *ONE* POUND CAN...

"...IF *ONLY* TO SAVE HIM FROM WHAT HE'D *BECOME...*"

AND *THAT..* SHOULD *DO* IT.

YEAH-- JUST GIVE 'EM A FEW *MINUTES* TO SHAKE OFF THE EFFECTS OF THE *ANESTHETIC--*

--WHILE YOU GIVE *US* THE *MONEY.*

ALL THAT HIPPOCRATIC OATH *STUFF...?*

DOCTOR BULLSHIT...

"...WHICH IS *NOT* TO SAY THAT *ILDA* HAD ANY KIND OF *PICNIC,* EITHER..."

OH *DEAR...*

...YOU *NEVER* TOLD ME...

...HOW *SLIMY* "ORGANIC" IS...

...YOU *BASTARDS--* IT *ALL* HURTS--!

IT'S A *TOUGH* LIFE...

...*NOW*--I PROMISED TO BRING THIS BASTARD *DOWN...*

...MY ONLY *MISTAKE* WAS MAKING THE *PROMISE* TO THE *ONLY* PERSON WHO EVER MEANT *ANYTHING* TO ME...

"...SO-- BECAUSE *STAR* MADE A *PROMISE* IN A MOMENT OF *WEAKNESS...*"

"...ILDA AND STARKER BECAME A WALKING *TESTAMENT* TO TWISTED LOVE'S *PAIN*..."

OH, *YES*- I WORK FOR THE *LORD*, NOW, *MOSTLY*..

--*YEAH*.. ONCE I'D MADE MY *PEACE*, IT WAS *EASY*...

...*RENOUNCING* THE WORLDLIES--

SHUT UP AND *DRIVE*...

TO HELL WITH *YOU*.. I CAN DROP YOU *HERE*...

...THE *ONLY* MAN I BEND *MY* KNEE TO IS *TOMMY*...

SORRY... WE'VE COME A *LONG* WAY TO SEE THE *LORD*...

I *UNDERSTAND*...

...FOR A LITTLE *STIFFENING* OF THE *FARE*--

...I CAN GET YOU *VERY* CLOSE TO THE *MUSEUM*... WHAT DO YOU *SAY*...?

"NOTHING I EVER LIKED *BETTER* THAN A *CHURCHMAN* WITH THE *BACKBONE* OF A *CAPITALIST*..."

T&LC

851

HOW MUCH FOR EVEN *CLOSER*...?

WELL...

tinkletinktinkclinkink!!

WOW!

FOR *THAT* KIND OF COIN, I'LL GET YOU INTO THE *GIFT SHOP* IN THE *LOBBY*.

"...SOMEHOW, BRENDA MANAGED TO GET ON THE MUSEUM GROUNDS...

"...MAYBE IT'S JUST SENTIMENTAL OLD ME...

"...BUT I ALWAYS FOUND IT IRONIC THAT BRENDA--WHO NEVER BELIEVED IN KAREL..."

DOES THE LORD TOMMY ASK THE OXEN TO DO HIS BIDDING...?

"...SHOULD BE THE CHOSEN ONE--OF ALL PEOPLE..."

"...BUT THEN AGAIN, I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED ABOUT THE CHOSEN PEOPLE...

"...AND HOW MUCH THEY HAD TO DO WITH THE CHOICE..."

THEN WHY SHOULD MAN KNEEL TO HIS LESSER NEIGHBORS...

...SIMPLY FOR THEIR WEAKNESSES...?!?

BRENT--IS THAT YOU?!

"...IN HER CASE, WHAT COULD SHE HAVE BEEN THINKING WHEN SHE MARRIED TOMMY, LO, THOSE CENTURIES AGO...?"

IT WAS THE FIRST GOD WHO GAVE MAN DOMINION OVER THAT FIRST EARTH...

...NOW TOMMY GRANTS THAT DOMINION TO THE UNIVERSE...

KAREL... IT IS YOU, ISN'T IT...

NO... DEAR MAN...SO SORRY...

...IT'S TIME YOU LET KAREL GO, BRENT...

OH, MY DEAR--MY LADY AND LIEGE--IT IS YOU...

"POOR BRENT--OF EVERY-ONE I KNEW--HE FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO LET KAREL REST...

"...CARRYING WITH HIM FOREVER HIS OWN PRESUMED GUILT FOR HER DEATH..."

HOW MAY I SERVE YOU, MY GODDESS...?

"...AND FOR TOMMY'S ASCENSION..."

BFMA

FMI

I FOUND THE METHUSELOID PARENT RACE...

IT IS ALL SO VERY SIMPLE...

...THEY HAVE GIVEN ME THE MEANS...

...I FORGIVE YOU, LORD WOOD...

...TO SEPARATE TOMMY FROM THE ESSENCE THAT WAS ONCE KAREL...

...FOR ANY TRANSGRESSION YOU MAY HAVE MADE...

...'S NO WAY ON ANY GREEN EARTH I CAN GET ANYWHERE NEAR HIM...

...NOW TAKE THIS BLADE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE...

...I WAS HIS WIFE--BUT YOU WERE HIS LIEUTENANT...

...AND BEHEAD THIS MONSTER...

...YOU CAN GET NEXT TO HIM...

...GUT THE PRETENDER...

OH, GODDESS-- TO SERVE YOU AGAIN--

"WHAT'D I TELL YOU...?"

GET IT THROUGH THAT SAINTLY SKULL OF YOURS...

...I'M NO GODDESS...

--IN THE BEGINNING YOU DENIED YOUR OWN DIVINITY--

--EVEN TO THOSE WHO'D WITNESSED YOUR ASCENSION...

...IT WAS THAT VERY HUMILITY THAT SERVED YOU SO WELL...

"IT WAS AN EGOCENTRIC MECHANISM...

"...TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVERYTHING, LIKE IT WAS COMING TO HIM."

WOW- YOU REALLY HAVE TIPPED OVER THE BRINK THIS TIME, HONEY...

...BUT, CRACKED OR NO-- YOU'RE STILL THE BEST SHOT AT GETTING NEXT TO HIM...

BACK IT UP--THAT MEANS YOU--!

...AND IF IT *MEANS* SENDING A *LUNATIC* TO END THIS *MISERY*, *FINE*.

--I *SAID*, BACK UP...

...ONLY *B-5 WORSHIP* TICKETS BEYOND THIS *LINE*...

...AND *NOBODY'D* EVER SELL A B-5 TO *YOU*...!

"ONLY *THREE* THINGS TOMMY REALLY WANTED OUT OF LIFE... *BEYOND* ETERNITY, OF COURSE...

"...THE *LOVE* OF A GOOD AND DOCILE *WOMAN*--THE ABSOLUTE UNCONDITIONAL *ADORATION* OF EVERY LIVING THING...

"...AND *FINALLY*, A DEATH *SO* MELO-DRAMATIC AS TO MAKE HIM AN *INSTANT* AND PERMANENT *MARTYR*..."

I *KNOW* HOW IMPORTANT IT CAN BE FOR YOU FANATICS TO GET *CLOSE* TO THE EMINENCE...

...EVEN YOU FREAKS HE'S *NEVER* GOING TO LET IN THE *KINGDOM*...

...BUT RULES ARE *RULES*--NO TWO WAYS *ABOUT* IT...

NO! I SAY NO!!

AND I SAY KILL HIM *NOW*!

AND I'M IN CHARGE!!

R 12

skizzzzzizzzizizzizk

"...BUT *ONLY* TOMMY COULD HAVE *TWO* SEPARATE CONSPIRACIES AGAINST HIM--ON THE *SAME* DAY--*AND* IN THE *SAME* PLACE..."

AND *SO*-- WITH NO *FURTHER* ADO...

"...WHAT I *NEVER* COULD HAVE ANTICIPATED...

"...WAS THAT OVER-POWERINGLY *FAMILIAR* FRAGRANCE...

"...AND FROM THE AUDIENCE'S *HUSHED* SILENCE, I KNEW *THEY* SENSED IT, *TOO*...

"...THE *MUSTY* BUT APPEALING SMELL OF A *COLD*, EMPTY *ROOM*..."

"...IT WAS AN *AROMA* I ASSOCIATED WITH THE LONG HALLS OF THE *MUSEUM*...

"...I GUESS IT WAS ABOUT *THEN* THAT I FELT *KAREL'S* HAND IN *MINE*."

THE LIVING GOD *HIMSELF*!

Tommy

TOMORROW

YOU CAN FEEL IT, TOO, HUH?

THAT BITCH-- SHE'S BACK-!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN--

LATER, HOMER--

--WELL, MY CHILDREN--

WASN'T THAT A MIGHTY DAY!!

A MIGHTY DAY!

WHEN I FIRST CAME TO SAVE YOUR IMMORTAL SOULS...!

AMEN.

"...AND NOW IT SEEMED TO HAVE FINALLY PENE-TRATED TO TOMMYS INNER SELF...

"...THAT BURIED PEBBLE OF THE HEART OF DARKNESS...

"...THAT ALL THEY LOVED OF HIM...

"...WAS THAT PART OF TOMMY THAT WAS KAREL...

"...AND IT SEEMED HIGHLY UNLIKELY HE'D EVER BE FREE OF HER PRESENCE..."

THE LAST OLD GOD--

--PAYING HOMAGE TO THE NEW...

...AND STILL I AM HERS IN MY HEART--

-I AM THE RESUR-RECTION- YOUR LIGHT OF LIGHTS...

...HERE TO TAKE YOU FROM THE MUD TO THE STARS...

"ILDA AND STARKER HAD BOTH GONE THROUGH LIVING HELL TO PROTECT THEMSELVES..."

THE OLD GOD.. THAT BITCH-SHE GAVE US THE ETERNAL CURSE..

THAT'S RIGHT.. I SAID CURSE--!

"...BUT DID IT REALLY MATTER--SURVIVING A CONFRONTATION WITH THE LIVING GOD...

"...IF IT MEANT SPENDING ETERNITY AS A CAN OF FEVERISH PUTRESCENCE..."

AMEN-- YES, LORD

A MIGHTY DAY!

TAKE ME!! I'M YOURS--

AMEN!

I AM HERE TO BRING THE CLEANSING FIRE--

-TO FIND THE TRUE MEN AMONG YOU-

"...AND THAT'S WHEN HE STARTED GETTING WEIRD.."

DON'T YOU USE THAT TONE WITH ME, YOU LITTLE--

KAREL!

YOU BITCH-- I'M WAY PAST YOU-- NOW--!

YOU'RE SO DEAD IT HURTS, BABE--

--I'M THE SOUND OF THUNDER, NOW...

"...LET IT BE KNOWN-- HERE AND NOW...

"...I NEVER WROTE ANY OF HIS SPEECH THAT NIGHT...

"...'SO DEAD IT HURTS, BABE'? I MEAN, REALLY..."

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE IS NOTH..

KAREL- YOU'RE DEAD, BITCH-!

I'M THE SOUND OF THUNDER NOW!!

OVER THERE--!

HUSTLE-- OR WE'RE DEAD MEN--!

BRAKABRAKABRAKATHOOOOMM

"...AT ANY RATE...

"...IT CERTAINLY SEEMED TO ME...

GROWWWRRYUNCHWORL

TUGCHH!!

"...THAT TOMMY NEVER SEEMED SURPRISED BY THE ATTACKS...

"...I MEAN, HE ATE THE DAMNED BOLT OF ENERGY, FOR KAREL'S SAKE

JON--

--SO--YOU FINALLY GOT WHAT YOU ALWAYS WANTED...

...MECHANICAL BABE--AND KNOWING HOW IT FEELS, TOO...

"...TOMMY ALWAYS KNEW HOW TO CUT THROUGH THE BULL-SHIT, AND GET RIGHT TO THE MAIN EVENT...

"...BUT EVEN THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A LITTLE STRONG..."

YOU DISGUSTING, MISCEGENATING LOUT--!

YOU THINK YOU KNOW LOVE?

I KNOW LOVE, YOU PERVERSE TWITCH ON THE EVOLUTIONARY SCALE--

"...THAT, I WROTE..."

SKKRUMMDEEEUHHH!!

YAAARRGGH!

THE LOVE OF A GOOD WOMAN!

--THE LOVE OF A GOOD WOMAN...

...NOT THE LOATHSOME CROSSING OF SPECIES YOU LIVE FOR...

"NO ONE COULD HAVE BEEN PREPARED FOR WHAT HAPPENED..."

"...I CAN'T SAY WHY...

"...BUT I LAUGHED-- AND LAUGHED..."

YOU DOUBT ME...?

...THEN SEE AS I SEE--!

"...IT WAS ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS EVERY SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT WAITS FOR, PRAYS FOR...

"...THE UNQUESTIONABLE DEMONSTRATION, FOR AN UNBELIEVER, OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE OF THE LOCAL LORD...

"... AT ANY RATE, FOR A MOMENT THERE, I COULD SEE...

"...OR, AT THE VERY LEAST, I COULD SEE WHAT TOMMY SAW..."

YOU USED ME, BITCH--SET ME UP...!

"...AND WHATEVER REMAINED OF KAREL-- THAT ESSENCE WITHIN HIM...'

"...HAD TURNED TOMMY INSIDE OUT..."

THIS IS WHAT THE CHINESE HAVE BEEN PREDICTING--?

NO, NO--JUST WHAT THE MUTANT CHURCHES HAVE BEEN SAYING--

--A HUMPED BEAST OF FLESH AND METAL AND FLESH AGAIN--SHALL SLOUCH TOWARD BETH--

HUMPED BEAST, SHIT--

--THAT'S JON STARKER--HE WAS AT TOMMY'S SIDE IN THE FIRST RAPTURE--

"...'FIRST RAPTURE' INDEED--EVEN IN THAT MOMENT OF MORTAL TERROR..."

I TRIED TO TELL HOMER-BUT HE DIDN'T BELIEVE ME--

...TOOK IT FOR IRONY...

GUUGGH!

"...I LOVED BEING QUOTED...

"...MY READERS DO AMAZE ME SOMETIMES..."

I'LL KILL YOU AGAIN, KAREL...

SKIZZLIXXSPATTERSPAIT

"...THIS CROWD DIDN'T SEE THIS AS AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT...

"...HELL, NO! THIS WAS ALL PART OF THE GREATER SPIRITUAL TAPESTRY...

"...I COULDN'T HAVE WRITTEN A BETTER PASSION PLAY...

"...ALL IT NEEDED WAS A JUDAS..."

GOING TO BREAK YOUR BACK, JUST LIKE A LOBSTER...

...REMEMBER LOBSTER, JON...?

SNAPP!

LOBSTER--

-FROM BEFORE WE HANDED THE PARTY OVER TO ANY PROTOPLASMIC ENTITY THAT LEFT A TRAIL INTENTIONALLY...

...AND GAVE UP OUR DOMINION IN THE NAME OF EQUALITY..

KAREL...

...LETTING THE BASE AND DARK INSTINCTS OF THE ANIMALS BE OUR MOTIVATION TO THE STARS...

...KAREL!

ISN'T THERE A BETTER WAY TO MARTYR ME...?

"FOR JUST THAT BRIEF MOMENT...

"...I SAW THE WORLD-- THE RACE-- THE UNI-VERSE-- AS TOMMY DID..."

KAREL...

A BETTER WAY THAN A HALF-A-MAN--

--AND HIS ROBOT TRAMP...?

CRACK!

"...AND I THOUGHT I'D NEVER WANT TO SEE AGAIN..."

LEAVE HER ALONE!

"...THEN OLD WOOD POPPED UP...

MEEEEEKKK

"...BUT, OF COURSE, EVERYBODY WAS KAREL TO HIM... EVERYBODY"

WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE...?

MY OWN JUDAS--CRAWLING FROM UNDER HIS OWN ROCK...

JUDAS!?!

YOU RAPACIOUS, SACRILIGIOUS MONSTER-- JUDAS!?!

DAMNED RIGHT, "JUDAS". YOU TREACHEROUS LITTLE CUR...

...BUT JESUS NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO GET HIS BACK...!

SHLLK

ZLLLKKK

KAREL!

YOU USED ME, BITCH--

--SET ME UP-- ALL A SET-UP-- FOR YOUR DAMNED ASCENSION--

MMMLLL

ZLKKK

"... THAT'S WHEN, IN THE MIDST OF THE DIN, EVERYBODY HEARD IT..."

YES.

"...POOR TOMMY...

"...FOR ALL HIS TALK OF 'GENETIC PURITY'...

"...TO BE BROUGHT DOWN BY HIS OWN LITTLE IMPURITY...

"...AT ANY RATE, THE LIGHT WAS DEAFENING...

"...AND THEN, FINALLY, WINKED OUT..."

"...TAKING BACK WITH IT, TO WHATEVER ETERNITY FROM WHICH IT CAME...

"...MY OWN MOMENTARILY RETURNED SIGHT.

"...MOST OF THE CROWD HAD FLED THE SCENE WHEN THE FUR STARTED FLYING...

"...SUDDENLY, THE FEW THAT REMAINED JOINED VOICES IN UNISON...

"...SINGING THE FIRST VERSE OF KAREL'S FAVORITE HYMN... 'RAPTUROUS SPLENDOR'..."

TIME TO SPLIT, HOMER

WHO'S THAT...?

YOUR ONLY REAL FRIEND...

AND THE OTHER ONE...

"THEY WERE BOTH RIGHT...

"DAMNED IF I'D ADMIT IT, THOUGH."

LET'S GO...

BRENDA...?

THE ONE AND ONLY...

AND LET'S NOT FORGET ME...

I'VE TRIED TO FORGET YOU FOR YEARS...

SAVE THE GAGS FOR LATER, HOMER- LET'S JUST GET US THE HELL OUT OF HERE...

...ONCE THESE FANATICS WAKE UP, THEY COULD GET REAL UGLY...

"YOU COULD SEE WHY I WAS CRAZY ABOUT HER...ALWAYS HAD BEEN, I GUESS..."

"FOR THE NEXT FEW *MONTHS*, ON NEARLY *EVERY* WORLD IN THE KNOWN *UNIVERSE*...

"...IT *RAINED* AN ARTIFICIAL *METEOR* SHOWER...

"...A *HAIL-STORM* OF METAL...

"...AS TOMMY'S *FLEET*--EVERY SINGLE VESSEL...

"...DISINTEGRATED IN ORBIT

"IT *RAINED* GOD DAMNED MOLTEN *METAL* ON OUR *HONEYMOON*...

"...OUR *HONEYMOON*...

"...DAMN, SHE WAS A *SPORT*... A *GAME* DOLL...

"...EVEN UNDER THAT *HELLISH* ONSLAUGHT, WE PICKED OUT *THIS* PIECE OF *LAND*...

"...I *MEAN*, EVEN US FORMER *GODS* HAVE TO RETIRE *SOMETIME*...

"AND WITH KAREL *BACK* AS SPIRITUAL *GODMOTHER*...

"...AND THE AGING PROCESS *RETURNED*...

"...IT WAS *TIME* TO MAKE THE *BEST* USE OF TIME--*AGAIN*.

"YEAH-- BRENDA WAS A *SPORT*...

"...A REAL SPORT...

"...I MISS HER SO..."

KEEP IT DOWN, HOMER--

-IT ISN'T OFTEN I GET A SECOND CHANCE--

LIKE HELL!

HOMER-- YOU--YOU-

-BIPED!

THUNGK!

DAMN IT, HOMER--

--WHILE YOU WERE BUSY CURING THE HUMAN RACE OF IMMORTALITY--

--COULDN'T YOU HAVE GOTTEN RID OF THAT DAMNED INSTINCT TO PISS IN OTHER PEOPLE'S SOUP--?

SHUT UP, KITTY--

--WHO DIED AND LEFT YOU IN CHARGE...?

YOU MISS HER, TOO DON'T YOU F'TATATEETA...?

SHE WAS AWFULLY GOOD TO YOU, TOO...

HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU, HOMER...

...ABOUT EXPECTING GRATITUDE FROM A CAT...?

YOU COULD WAIT FOREVER...

...I COULD WAIT FOREVER...

BRENDA ALWAYS INSISTED IT WASN'T IMMORTALITY THAT INTERESTED HER--

--IT WAS LIFE AFTER DEATH--

--SHE JUST WANTED TO COME BACK AND LORD IT OVER ALL HER FRIENDS.

WELL, HOMER--YOU CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING...

NO--

--BUT IF SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME THE COLLAPSE OF CIVILIZATION WAS THE MIDDLE OF THE STORY, AND NOT THE END--

--I'D'VE GOTTEN OFF RIGHT THERE.

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